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ASOKA
AND OTHER POEMS.

ASOKA

And Other Poems.

BY

NANIKRAM VASANMAL THADANI.

DELHI

1921.

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ASOKA.

PART FIRST.

“ DAY, and the sun ; night, and the moon and stars ;
Clouds, and the flash of lightning, and it rains ;
Death, and the end of many petty wars ;
Peace, and the world a newer life obtains.’
Thus is it written—”

Here he stopped and gazed
A moment on those gathered in the hall.
Sad was his voice, but full of noble grace,
And simple majesty, inborn of power,
More felt than heard or seen, that made his eyes—
Bright with the mirrored rapture of his soul—
An altar of his people’s reverent love.

A warrior’s tall, war-weathered frame had he,
Stalwart and stately, as by Nature made
For strength and ease. But now the fire of life
Burnt low in him, subdued by many years
Of vigil and fast and prayer ;—and he had seen
A fifty summers into winters change,
And many kingdoms rise and fall—for then
The stronger ruled by force and might was law.

And he—when manhood on his lips had laid
Its seal of valour, and the blood flowed warm,
And thought upon the wings of fancy flew
To realms of high adventure and renown—
Ambitious of a kingdom that might be
The proudest in the land—he in his youth
Had made three wars upon the neighbouring
kings.

By one in equal fight was he opposed ;
Another he had slain, and ta'en the third
A prisoner on the field. And when the last
Was brought in chains before him—he who was
The friend of his own father in the days
When girdled round by foes, he might have fared,
But for his aid, even as now he did
Before the graceless son—his heart was moved,
And thinking o'er the present and the past,
And woeful changes wrought by Time and Fate,
His mind was troubled and, unconsciously,
A tear stole to his eye. Then from his throne
All hurriedly he descended low, and came
Where stood his father's benefactor—one
Who in his proud, though aweless, majesty,
With flashing scorn from each defiant eye,
Appeared more stately than the conqueror—
And kneeling at his feet, undid the chains,
And humbly sought forgiveness for the deed,
And raised him to his throne beside himself,

Crowned, and with every mark of royalty.
Then reconciled, restored him to his realm.

Thereafter, as the feeling grew in him,
Revolving in his heart the lot of kings,
And lease of earthly empires, and because
He heard the story of the Prince who left
His father, mother, kingdom, wife and child,
To seek the light of wisdom, and revealed
The Truth that is for ever—he resigned
The cares of home and state, and spent his days
In study, fast and penance, and his nights
In vigil, meditation, and in prayer.
Thus lived Kalinga's monarch Satvasan.

For many years he reigned in peace, and known
As royal saint, was revered by all kings.
But now at Pataliputra ruled a prince,
Asoka who, insatiate in his greed,
Had quelled his brothers, kinsmen, and his chiefs,
To gain the kingdom of his father—won
By force, fear, guile, and skill to part and rule,
Marriage alliance and the statesman's art,
By Chandragupt his grandsire—and his sway
Extended to the north beyond the snows
Of star-ingirt Himalayas, and embraced
The ridgy realms of Kabul and Kandhar.

Towards the east—the land of golden light,
Where holy Ganga flows down to the sea,
Bengal—and to the west—where spicy winds
Blow from the shores of Muscat, and convey
Rubies and pearls of Oman and Iran
To India, where the sacred Sindhu flows
Down to the sea—the land of palms obeyed
The sceptre of his rule. Yet like a flame
The fever of ambition in him glowed
Unquenchable, and seeking to extend
His wide dominions to the south, resolved
To wrest Kalinga from its sovereign lord.

He bade the King relinquish utterly
His crown and kingdom, and with gifts of gold,
Jewels and pearls, two hundred elephants,
A thousand slaves, a hundred dark-eyed maids—
The fairest of the court and capital—
And with his nobles, chiefs and ministers,
Bare-footed, and on bended knee to make
A vassal's loyal homage to his liege,
And wait upon his pleasure for his fate.
Or else—so ran the mandate—he would make
Kalinga but a name to shudder at;
Would overrun the land with fire and sword,
Sow it with corpses, and with streaming gore
Water the field of Death.

“ Therefore take heed,

And yield while thou hast time, nor vainly strive
To prove thy strength against superior force.
Spare then thy country all this wrong and spare
The widow's groan, the mother's wail, and shriek
Of homeless orphan and the captive maid.
If not, the sin and sufferings of this War
Upon thy head, and curse of God and Man :
Beware, and so farewell." Thus ended he.

And now had Satvasan assembled all
The nobles and the elders of his realm.
For years he had not seen them, and had left
The management of all the state affairs
Entrusted to a Council of the Five—
The wisest of his kingdom—and himself
Retired into his soul's deep sanctuary.
And well had they performed their task :—But now
The crimson cloud of war had from the north
Blinded the light of day, and sore perplexed
By diverse and conflicting arguments
Of pride, hope, fear, and calculating doubt
Of many chances of the battlefield,
They knew not what to do, and deemed it best
To seek the saintly guidance of their King.

And so he came, and called to Council all
The elders of the people :—sad and grave,
In simple white of an ascetic clad,

With sandals and a crownless head, and bare,
Save for his hair, with mingled dark and white
In streaming locks, as night and day at eve.

“ ‘Day, and the sun—night, and the moon and
stars;
Clouds, and the flash of lightning, and it rains :
Death, and the end of many petty wars ;
Peace, and the world a newer life obtains.’
Thus is it written—”

Here he stopped and gazed
A moment on those gathered in the hall,
And on a purple scroll he held in hand.
And then his voice arose, as of the wind,
Sighing and struggling through the pines :—“ Ye
know

The reason of this council, and ye know
What dire events the womb of Fate may bear.
Asoka— and they call him Wicked—seeks
To make this land the burning ground of death.
We knew his father, Bindusara, good,
And gracious, and a lifelong friend of ours.
But now the son has threatened to invade
Our country, and to give to fire and sword
Our people, wrench the kingdom from our hands,
‘And perpetrate all horrors known to war—
Unless, un-Aryan, willingly we yield,
Nor raise a single arm our Motherland

To save from shame and bondage; and unless
With tributary jewels, pearls and gold,
Two hundred elephants, a thousand slaves,
And all our elders, chiefs and ministers,
We do him vassal-homage on our knees,
And send a hundred maidens from our homes
To thralldom and a darker fate than death.
This sendeth he : What should we in reply ?
Speak, he who will."

He ceased :—A tremor filled
His voice as rising towards the end, his heart
Throbbled as the waters rushing through a cave ;
And on his brows, the scar above the eye—
A mark of battles fought in former years—
Glowed with a sudden heat. But soon repressed,
His swelling bosom and his surging mind,
He calmly took his seat upon his throne.

Expectant silence filled the hall—a lull
Within the forest ere the winds arise,
Felling the tallest trees. For many a heart
Ran purple in its rage, and with a wrath
Tumultuous, sought to burst its heaving sides
With words of fierce defiance, scathe and scorn,
And vengeance wreaked for insult to their King.
But all sat still, and every eye was turned—
Dark with the fury of a lioness,
When she beholds a hunter steal away

Her little ones—towards the warrior-chief,
The leader of the hosts. Quickly he rose,
Proud, tall, and stately—and in reverence
Bowed to the King, and then his flashing eye
Swept o'er the assembled elders in the hall;
And laying his hand upon his sword he spoke :—

“ My tongue, O Lord,” he cried “ is in my sword,
And speech, in the blows it deals. I know of naught
Meeter to give Asoka in reply,
Than in the hot blood of this arm to steep
Thy naked sword and send it to the king
To read its tale of horrors. Words are wind :
Death is the only language warriors know.
And as for the rest—as may the gods be pleased.”

Brief was his bold defiance, like the wave
That overwhelms a boat in sudden storm.
A chorus of applause, with thundering shouts—
“ War and our vengeance, war and blood and
death—”

Burst at its close, and echoing from the roof,
And sides and ends, rang through the spacious hall.
Another spake, and then a third—

“War to the death—
For honour, life, and glory—to the death.
War is the warrior's aim, the hero's joy,
The people's pride, the kingdom's boundless hope.

ASOKA.

The cry of pain and suffering will be drowned
In one long peal of triumph, and the tears
Of widow's bosom changed to beaming smiles,
To welcome home—victorious from the field—
A gallant son or brother. Death will write
The noble deeds of those in battle slain
Upon the living page of future Time,
And mothers tell their children by each hearth
The stories of their valour, as they wake
And listen, throbbing at each kindling word.
But if we yield—for fear our weaker arms,
Against the mightier power Asoka wields,
Would shiver in the shock of battle, fall
Crushed to the dust and perish—and to save
Our country from the victor's vengeful sword,
Pillage and fire and lustful sacrilege,
We deem 'twere best—to 'scape a greater harm—
To bow to circumstances and submit—
Then may the gods destroy us ere we fall
Down to the abyss of this eternal shame;
And spare the curses that our children heap
Upon their fathers' head. But who will yield?
The manhood of our country is not dead;
Nor dead the martial spirit of our race;
Nor dead the memory of those glorious deeds
When knelt to us the proudest, and we gave
Kingdoms away to subject-princes here.
And who is this Asoka, though his realm

Extend from sea to sea ? With equal power,
And more exalted resolution, we
Will meet him on the field, and who can doubt,
Who fear the battle's issue ? 'Those who fall—
What nobler death can heroes hope to find
Than slaying in righteous war, unsought, their foes,
Be slain in turn, and gain the bliss of Heaven ?
Behold, the gods and future ages gaze
On our decision here, to rise or perish.
As men and warriors, lead us to the fight ;
Lead us to fight—to conquer or to die.”

A chorus of applause arose again,
And filled the hall. Then spake a hoary man,
An elder of the people—Kalidas :—

“ What says the reverend sage whose visioned eye
Hath probed the secret of the fateful stars,
And looking through the heart of coming Time,
Divined the dark results of human deeds—
Veiled from the common sight ? Is peace or war
For us the best ? What have the gods ordained ?
What says the Father Gautam ? ”

Then all eyes
Were turned towards him, where he sat in front,
Beside the King, in single saffron clad.

He was a holy Brahman, and had spent
His years in study of the sacred lore,
Wherein the Voice of God to all proclaims
Eternal Truth and everlasting Love.
And he had watched the motions of the stars,
And sun and moon, that weave the destiny
Of life in light and shadow, and had dived
Into the depths of human heart to read
The secret mysteries of the mind and soul.
Yet seventy years had not a wrinkle drawn
Upon his brows or dimmed his vision. Calm
As mountain heights above the storm, and clear
As sunlit snows above the clouds—he was
A saint and prophet, and his hair was white
As evening lotus on a summer lake.

Alone he lived within his forest haunt,
In ceaseless prayer and meditation—far
From bloated bubbles of this life—and came
At special call of his disciple-King.
And now he sat in honour, on a seat
Of silken saffron, and he looked on all
The assembled people in the hall, as one
In a vast dream, where mingled sights and sounds
Create a world of fancy, sad and new.
He sat, but all unheeding—for his mind
Was lost in its own mazes—and it seemed,
So strange his looks, as if he had beheld

Something that filled his wondering soul with awe,
Yet made him glad. A moment—and again
He was as calm as ever. And now all
In eager expectation turned to him,
Impatient, but he moved not : Then the King,
In voice as of the caverned echoes, spake :—

“ Tell us, O holy Father, what the gods—
Who know the good and evil of our deeds,
And through the labyrinth of our own desires
Draw us, with willing steps, towards the paths
Of life or death, unconscious—have ordained.
They know the present, future and the past,
And unto thee have given the power to see
What dark events lie in the womb of Fate.
Tell us, O Father, and I take this vow
That binds me and my people all—and may
Agni destroy us if we fear or fail—
Tell us and we will all in word and deed,
Be it in peace or war, in life or death,
Meekly obey them to the end—”

“ Forbear,
Forbear, O King,” exclaimed the sage, “ nor seek
To hold thy people to an awful vow
Which even thou, perchance, may'st fail to keep.
Yet what the gods have planned no man can
change—

Unconscious instrument of what they will.
But do ye wish to know ?—”

Then Kalidas—

“ Ay, tell us, holy Father, what the gods
Have willed on high, and we shall as they please.
The word that binds a sovereign, bindeth all
The subjects too—as what the heart commands
The hands obey—and surely they destroy
That kingdom where the people fear or fail
The honour of their monarch to uphold.
Therefore, O holy Father, tell us all,
And we will do, or in the effort die.”

Silence—as of the midnight forest, ere
The storm that thunders in the rolling clouds,
And lightning writhing like a wounded snake,
Lash the wide-wooded mountains—filled the room,
When Father Gautam slowly and thoughtfully
Rose, and with him rose the King and all
The princes, elders, chiefs and ministers.

Now every eye was fixed, and every ear
Attentive held each bated breath, and each
Excited heart was hushed in trembling awe—
When, with his folded hands, like dewy leaves
That hold in woven palms their wealth of flowers,
The holy Father turned his gaze to Heaven.

A wondrous light then shone around his face,
And in his eyes a starry splendour glowed,
And he was lost in his supernal trance :
And then a voice, as of the summer waves,
Breaking and bounding on the rocky shores,
Swelling and sinking in the distance, spake :—

“ Go forth and die upon the battlefield ;
Go forth and live immortal in your deed ;
Go forth and die, to live for evermore.

Be slain, but slay not—die but do not yield ;
Nor fight, nor fly—nor kill, nor cause to bleed ;
But suffer and be saved for evermore.

The world is wounded—let her heart be healed ;
The world is fettered—let her soul be freed ;
And free and whole, live on for evermore.

Go forth and die, ye earth's unbroken shield ;
Go forth and die—thus have the gods decreed ;
Go die, to live anew for evermore.”

He ceased, and sank down, paler than he rose,
Upon his seat, and then the King began :—

“ Be such your doom, O gods !—and we rejoice
To hear the voice of Fate :—But give us power—.

As ye have given the privilege to know
The high commission of your will divine—
Lest we should faint or falter—to achieve
The glorious purpose of your heavenly hearts.
Ye are the judges of our country's cause;
Ye are the guardians of our country's good;
And ye the healers of our country's wounds;
And to your watchful care do we resign
Our life, our kingdom, and our children's fate—
The maiden's honour and the mother's love.
Many are slaughtered on the battlefield;
Many are slain in petty strifes at home;
And many die before their proper time;
But could man suffer to be slain, nor slay,
And conquer hate with love, how quickly War
Should cease to be and all its horrors end.

“ And ye, my people, shrink not from this doom,
Which needs must be if so the gods ordain,
Whether we choose or no; so cheerfully
Let us accept what they are pleased to give.
A warrior's only fear is sickly death—
At home, unhonoured, or in broken lands;
But what more glorious end can be than theirs
Who dying for their country and their King,
And Dharma of their manhood, yet forbear
To slay the foe that seeks their land and life?

Upon the battlefield they die and gain
Immortal happiness in Heaven, and leave
A barren desert of this earth behind.
Those who destroy are in their turn destroyed,
And perish in the blood they cause to flow ;
But ye will live for ever, and your race
Will reap immortal honour by your deed.
A few more years, and all of you and yours
Will pass away, but as the summer waves
That leap and linger on the shores, but draw
No trace of water on the printless sands,
Though each seem like the other, and the whole
Unbroken. But by this great sacrifice,
And self-renunciation of the race,
Unheard of in the annals of the world,
Your name will live and future ages sing
Of soul triumphant o'er the bleeding heart,
And teach the erring child of Man to know
The death that warriors of the spirit die,
That all the truest on the earth may live.

“ But if there be, within this hall or realm,
Any who cannot follow where we lead,
Or tremble at the mighty sacrifice,
We here absolve them all, and they are free
To do as they prefer. But we must go,
And if need be, alone.”

Then Mahavir,
The great commander of the hosts replied—
“ We know not what, O Lord, for us were best,
Whether to live or die. But this we know,
It's best to do what may the gods direct,
And thou desire. The warrior knows of war
Wherein he fights and slays and if, perchance,
Himself is slain, it's easier in the heat
Of battle thus to die; but to be slain,
And not to slay the slayer, were hard indeed.
Yet, though this doom, O King, is passing strange,
We follow where thou lead'st to win or die.”

Then others spake—“ We follow thee, O Lord,
Wherever thou may'st lead, to win or die.”
And then the King again—“The gods be praised !
We are not worthy of this sacrifice,
And only follow wherever they lead.
Now send Asoka but a simple shield,
And let the haughty king have this reply :—

‘ High are thy northern realms of mountain
snows;
But deep our waves where hide such peaks
beneath;
Bright is the crown of glory on thy brows;
But brief the day, and all this sinks in death.

Welcome to our Kalinga, and the feast
Of blood and bones is ready for thy hosts ;
Welcome, and here is many a holy priest,
And many a burning ground upon our coasts.

Welcome ! We draw the shield of human life
To save our land from the invader's sword ;
And Death will write the horrors of this strife,
And with thy tears of blood thy name record.

Our tribute is the agony of years ;
We give our manhood to appease thy might ;
We have not sought this bloody war and fierce,
And may the gods defend the cause of right.'

“ Send this to him, and when the old moon sets,
And rises like a wave of light again,
Softening the kindling eyes of God of War,
Assemble all the warriors of our hosts
Upon the northern boundaries of our realm,
Where mighty Mahanandi separates
Asoka's soulless kingdom from our own.
Till then, farewell : But we shall meet again,
As warriors who have never known defeat,
Who yet to do the bidding of their gods,
Though victory smile upon their arms, forbear
To slay their foes and choose, themselves, to die.”

ASOKA.

PART SECOND.

I.

WEEP for the unhappy land—
Her saintly lord no more;
Weep for the noble band
Whom no one can restore.

Groans of the wounded, moans of the dying,
The anguish of hearts left widowed and crying,
The curses of orphans, the country's lament,
Revenge of the gods who may never relent,
 Fall on thy head,
 And strike thee dead;
And thy children despair at their father's name—
Dragging their bones to thy ashes aflame—
 Bloody and red.

Asoka, the fires of Hell are burning;
Asoka, the men of Yama wait;
Behold the wheels of vengeance turning
 To hurl thee to their awful hate.

They did not fight—they did not fly,
But stood upon the field to die;

And could'st thou draw so murderously
The sword they would not aim at thee?

Did ye, O mighty gods of earth and Heaven,
Behold the deed and yet not spare the brave?
Did not the stars fall blind, in horror driven
Across the sky, with throbbing hearts to save
The bleeding mortals who would nor fight, nor yield,
And fell upon their bosoms' broken shield?
Is Dharma dead
That in their stead
Asoka lives and reigns with terrors unconcealed?

No more! the fires of Hell are burning;
No more! the men of Yama wait;
Behold the wheels of vengeance turning
To hurl him to his awful fate.

Groans of the wounded, moans of the dying, -
The anguish of hearts left widowed and sighing,
The curses of orphans and the country's wail,
Revenge of the gods when the earth grows pale,
Fall on his head
To strike him dead :—
Yet spare him awhile to see all perish—
The cruel hopes his heart did cherish,
So dark and dread.

Peace to the fallen ! to the tyrant be given
The torments of Hell for ever to live in.

II.

HE'LL come to me no more—ah, never more !
The hero of my heart will come no more !

Beat the breast and pluck the hair,
With bleeding eyes and bosom bare ;
And rend the sky, the earth, the air—
Wild with the anguish of despair :—
Beat the breast and pluck the hair.
For he will come to me no more,—ah, never more !
The hero of my heart will come no more !

Ah, little child, where is thy father fled ?
Go, smile and play, thy little eyes are red ;
Ah, dost thou know the living and the dead,
And why and where thy noble father bled ?
Go, smile and play, thy little eyes are red.
Thy sire will come no more—ah, never more !
The hero of thy heart will come no more !

Ah, little orphan, where doth mother go ?
Ah, little orphan, wherefore weep'st thou so ?
Go, smile and play—thou canst not surely
know.
May all the gods protect thee here below :
Come, let me kiss thee, dear—now smile and
go.

Mother will come to thee no more—ah, never more !
Then, little orphan, wilt thou smile no more ?

O father Yama, smile upon his death ;
O gentle Agni, kindle with thy breath
The light of life that never perisheth.
O gentle Agni, cast thine eyes beneath,
And, Yama, smile upon a widow's death.
For we shall meet to part no more, no more !
And live again, to die no more, no more !

III.

KINDLE the fire, oh kindle the blazing fire;
Kindle the heart of Agni with desire;
And let the flames consume the land entire :
Kindle the fire, oh kindle the blazing fire.

Three hundred thousand warriors faced the foe;
They drew the shield and dropped the sword and
bow;
And stood to save their King and country so;
The wind doth blow—oh kindle the blazing fire.

Three hundred thousand mighty warriors bled;
Three hundred thousand widows' hearts are red;
Three hundred thousand homes bewail the dead;
The pile is made—oh kindle the blazing fire.

The sun was blind in black eclipse that day;
And then the new moon all in shadow lay;
And trembled all the earth from bay to bay;
The wind doth play—oh kindle the blazing fire.

O Yama, sovereign Lord of Dharma, take
The warriors crowned in glory, and awake
Their eyes in joy which no rude tempests shake.
Now for their sake, oh kindle the blazing fire.

Yet spare the little orphan boy and maid,
Unconscious of their fathers who have bled,
And moaning mothers dying for the dead;
Where they are laid, oh kindle the blazing fire.

Kindle the fire, oh kindle the blazing fire;
Kindle the heart of Agni with desire;
And let the flames consume the world entire;
Kindle the fire, oh kindle the blazing fire !

ASOKA.

PART THIRD.

“ I’VE sinned, O Father, deeply have I sinned;
Now let me suffer to be saved, or die.
O Father, when I think how murderously—
Upon that day, when noble Satvasan
Assembled on the Mahanandi’s banks
The mighty warriors of his hosts—I charged
Their unresisting ranks, my soul doth tremble,
My body shakes, and I had fain the earth
Would open out her jaws to swallow me.
Oh God, it was a fearful, frightful sight,
And still I shudder to recall it. There,
Upon the river heights and bounding plains
Stood the proud warriors of Kalinga’s lord,
In numerous rows of chariots, elephants,
And horse and foot; and all the wooded land
Was flashing with their many shining arms :
And still they moved not. Only when the blasts
Of battle rang tumultuous from our side,
And din of trumpets, conchs and thundering
drums,
Mingled in wild uproar with furious yells
Of conquest-maddened hearts—a sweeter sound,
As of a choir of cymbals, harps and bells,
Rose lightly on the breeze in soft reply.

And in the morning, ere that baleful day
Commenced its lurid light, a messenger
In robes of white arrived, and simply said—
' Welcome to our Kalinga, and the waves
Of floodless Mahanandi will now flow
At your approach again—although in blood.'

" And then—have I the heart to tell the tale?
Yet must I tell thee all, that thou may'st know
The story of my guilt and judging, say
Whether my soul can ever be forgiven,
Or it were better, down this rocky height,
To plunge into the wide abyss of Death,
And in a little moment cease to be."

He paused awhile, and sighed, as in the trees
The heavy midnight wind doth sigh and swell :
Then gathering strength, went on—

" An elephant

New captured from the woods, with fiery eyes,
And lashing ears and foaming, rooting trunk,
Came rushing on, roaring beneath the goad
Of his young captor, and before him stood,
Nailed to the earth, the white robed messenger :
A moment—and the noose was round his waist,
And he was tossed into the dizzy air,
And hurled again upon the rocky ground ;
Then with a trampling tread the furious beast

Went thundering on—and all the man that lay
Was but a mangled mass. Such was the end
Of him who came to bid us welcome. Then,
Before the dawn was speckled in the east,
And stars yet twinkled in the dewy sky,
I gave the word to charge; and at the head
Of all my warriors crossed the dry-bed sands,
And gained the rising banks beyond—when lo!
There stood the myriad hosts of Satvasan.
Like warriors in a dream. Their arms were bright
Against the brightening morn, and every one
Was ready for the battle. Had they chose,
They might have stopped us all ere we approached
The border-land—so mighty was their force,
So well-equipped, so stately. I have seen
Many a fight, O Father, but this one
Was strange, supremely strange. They did not move,
They did not fight, they did not fly, but stood,
A solid wall of flesh and blood, opposed
To tiger-hearted foemen. Can I tell
What followed, Father? Oh, 'twas horrible,
'Twas horrible! Two murderous days and nights,
And all was over:—Mahanandi flowed
Again—with blood, and on its reeking heights
I stood victorious o'er this massacre
Of noble hearts who would nor fight nor yield;
And all the harrowed land was choked below
With corpses of the slain. Around me stood

My warrior-chiefs, rejoicing :—They had lost
Not e'en a single man, and there the foe
Rolled in the dust—three hundred thousand dead—
The King and meanest soldier side by side.

“ My mind was sad, and wished this ghastly War
Had never been. On many a battlefield
I've fought, and seen the wounded and the slain,
Victor and vanquished, struggling in their blood,
With gasp and groan and piteous heaving cry,
And never felt remorse. But who could bear
To see these wondrous warriors in their death—
Unconquered, unresisting, unrevenged !

“ But soon these softer sighs were hushed when
rose
Tumultuous shouts of triumph all around,
And jubilant echoes swelled the ringing breeze :
They hailed me as the mighty lord of earth,
Unrivalled in my glory, and extolled
The valour of my warriors who had slain
Unnumbered foemen on the field, and won
A bloodless battle on a purple plain.

“ And now, the last sad rites of Agri done,
In all due honour to the fallen brave,
We marched along, with pealing trumpets, through
A prostrate kingdom and a blighted land ;

For not a soul was seen, nor anywhere
A voice of welcome; and the harvest-fields,
Hamlets and towns and temples all were left
Abandoned to the spoiler's fire and sword.

“ And when we reached the royal city walls,
My heart all sank within me to behold
Volumes of smoke ascend the darkened sky;
And a deep voice, as we approached, was heard—
‘ Kindle the fire, oh kindle the blazing fire.’
The doors were open :—unopposed we passed
Into the burning city, and I saw—
Oh unforgettable horror of the sight !
The earth on fire and dark, on every side,
The sacred Suttees lay upon the flames
Of Agni's bosom for their fallen lords.
And then the little children, boys and girls,
Came slowly from their broken homes and cried—
‘ Oh ! kill us too—oh, kill us. Thou hast slain
Our fathers on the field, and now behold
Our mothers here :—Oh kill us, kill us all,
The little loveless, homeless orphans too,
That we may bear the pangs of death no more ! ’

“ O Father, never, never had I wept;
But now my heart was shaken, and the tears
Flowed hot and fast; my bosom ached, my eyes
Sank reeling in my head, and a deep cry

Arose of anguish in my soul. I saw
The earth give way before me, and the sky
Melt in the distance, and the waters part,
And Life all shrivel into a shadow :—There
Nothing appeared but blood, and o'er it stared,
With flaming eyes, an awful Form, and all
The air around me shuddered—' Here is Death :
Asoka, here is Death—Asoka's Death—
And perish all who see him.' Then I felt
What I had never felt before in War.

“ What more's to tell ? And now, O Father, say
If e'er this sinner's soul can be forgiven,
And those who bled forget, in Heaven, my deed.
My life's an hourly torment to my soul,
And death would be a blessing :—But a wink,
And all this fearful struggle endeth here.
But I had rather live in misery
For evermore, if so my tortured heart
Bring comfort to the living and the dead.
Teach me to pray, to suffer and repent,
By vigil, fast and penitential scourge,
And iron instruments of dark remorse,
That if I may not 'scape the fires of Hell,
I may at least with Man be reconciled
By mortal penance for what I have done.
But if this all be hopeless, then 'twere best

To plunge into the yawning gulf below,
And who would care if I had ever been."

Asoka ceased, and fell upon the feet
Of holy Upagupta, sobbing loud.
And as a hunter gazes on the dam,
With large, deep eyes of anguish, following him
As he doth bear her little fawn away
That yearns to meet its mother—and his mind
Flies to his prattling little ones at home,
And her who smiles to see them laugh and play—
And moved to pity, lets the weanling go,
So gazed the sage upon him where he knelt,
And kindly, yet all sadly to him said :—

" Asoka, rise—the gods are moved to tears
To see a sinner's sorrow :—Learn and live;
Undo the wrongs that thou hast done to gain
The peace of heart thou seekest :—Be thou here,
And bend thy body, mind and soul in prayer."

Thus lived Asoka in the Hermitage,
Far in the north in the Himalayan snows,
But as a lowly servant, and performed
All menial duties with a willing heart—
To sweep the floor, fetch water from the stream,
Or fuel from the wood—and he would fast,

And wake and weep and pray, and at the feet
Of holy Upagupta meekly learn
The deathless truths of life. But still his mind,
Tortured by the fierce anguish of his soul
With lightning darts of awful memories,
Drove him, alone, upon the pathless heights—
A fallen leaf before the winter wind.
And often in the darkness of the night,
He slept under the shadow of some tree,
By river bank or mountain side, and hoped
Some hungry tiger from its cave would leap
Upon his heart and end his days of woe.

And thus he brooded o'er his rankling grief—
Till by the grace of that Eternal power
That brings to good all evil, and the care
Of holy Upagupta, who foresaw,
How from his penitence a newer life
Might come to be on earth, his mind was soothed,
And from his soul the cloud of midnight rolled
Slowly away, and smile of early dawn
Melted his bosom with its dewy light,
And he beheld the trembling Star of Hope
Shine in the distant shadow of the east;
And underneath, a strait and lonely Path
Glanced through the gloom and, widening as it
rose,
Ascended to the sky; and a deep voice

Echoed within him—" Follow, follow the Path;
Humble and true and hopeful, follow the Path;
And so wilt thou be saved for evermore."
And thus one year of sorrow passed away.

And then there came from Gaya to the Sage
Two little boy-disciples—bright-eyed lads,
Indu and Sindu, brother-twins—and they
Were oft companions of the hermit-King.
They pleased him with their prattle, and their
 smiles
Shed sunlight on his soul, and they would sing
Their simple songs of joy to make him glad.
They called him father, and at early dawn
Accompanied him to the neighbouring stream,
To bathe and bring home water. In the morn
They sat beside him at the Sage's feet,
To learn the Dharma of their budding life,
And in the evening read their hymns and prayed.

For, as the Saint beheld their little hearts
Softened Asoka's soul, he let them be
Together more and more. Then on a morn,
The first day of the Moon, they all went out
To pay their humble offerings at the shrine
Of Vishnu on the mountain top; and there,
As now the King was sadder than before—
Revolving all the memories of that day,

The first of the new moon, the rocky heights,
Kalinga's warriors, and the battlefield,
And floodless Mahanandi's bloody waves,
And all the ghastly horrors of that deed—
The Sage desired the little boys to sing
The song that they had learnt the night before,
To soothe the aching bosom of the King.
And thus the little children sweetly sang :—

“ Save this world, O Father,
O save this world of life;
Creator and protector,
Quench the rage of strife.

We are Thy little children,
Thy erring little ones;
O, take us to Thy bosom,
As a Mother doth her sons.

Bright is the light of morning;
Bright is the light of day;
But brighter far, Thy glory,
O Lord, to whom we pray.

Soft is the shimmering star-light;
Sweet is the Moon above;
But softer still and sweeter
Art Thou, O Lord of Love.

Thou mak'st the flowers so tender;
Thou mak'st the breezes play;
And ripples on the waters
Rise and melt away.

Thy love is vast and wondrous;
Thy love is deep and true;
Thou know'st what is within us;
Thou knowest what we do.

Thou lovest all the Heaven;
Thou lovest all the earth;
Thou lovest all Thy creatures—
The infant ere its birth.

The little worm that creepeth,
The little ant that crawls—
Thou lovest them as dearly
As princes in their halls.

Nothing can be destroyed
That kindles with Thy breath;
A newer light awakens
Out of the fire of Death.

And all to Thee will gather,
In everlasting bliss

Of Life and Love, within 'Thee,
That ever was and is.

O save us, save us, Father,
Thy erring little ones;
And take us to Thy bosom,
As a Mother doth her sons.

And save this world, O Father,
And quench its rage of strife;
For all the world Thou lovest,
O mighty Lord of Life."

"O tell me, Father, will He take me too
Into His bosom, and forgive my deeds?"
Murmured Asoka sadly, as they ceased.
"Pray for that end, my son," replied the Sage,
"And make thyself more worthy of His love,
By meditation on the light of Truth,
And He will take thee to His own again.
There's much for thee to do, but not as yet;
So live in hope, and pray to be forgiven."

And then again upon a summer morn—
The same when He, who left this world of woe,
To seek for joy within his penance-grove,
And sitting by the river-side beheld

The ceaseless flow of waters to the sea,
And thought how Life and Time, for evermore,
Inwoven, play in their mysterious maze,
Upon the shores of dark Eternity,
As children, meeting in the morn again,
When they have tired themselves to sleep at night—
That day when unto Buddha were revealed
The marvels of the Light of Life within—
That truth and love alone can still the cry
Of sorrow, pain and suffering, and of death,
That not in penance but in sacrifice
Of man for man, is truest life of joy,
Breaking the bonds that chain him to the earth—
They went out early to the bathing-place.

The dawn had just then broken in the east,
And like the halo round a saint, the light
Was flashing softly in an orient cloud.
The sky was clear, and many a morning star
Glowed in its bosom, like the infant eyes
Waking in smiles upon a mother's arms.
They bathed and sat down on the grassy bank
To pray and in the calmness of the hour,
When in its dewy dreams all Nature lay,
And naught was heard, except in rippling sounds
The music of the waters and the breeze,
Their hearts were hushed, and all the tumults
ceased

Within Asoka's bosom, and he rose
At peace within himself and all the world.

"O sing to me your simple little songs,"
He cried, "ye children of the light of God.
I love to hear them, though they make me sad;
I love to hear them for they make me sweet—
At peace within myself and all the world."
And then the little Indu smiled and sang :—

"Flow, flow, fast or slow, into the mighty sea!
Fast or slow, away ye go into the mighty sea—
 Ye waters of the earth,
 Towards your place of birth :—
And flow, flow away and go, so pure and sweet
 and free,
Fast or slow, fast or slow, into the mighty sea.

 The clouds that had departed
 Towards the western seas,
Return now merry-hearted,
 With the fair southern breeze.

Low, low, soft and slow, upon the bed of earth,
Flow, flow, here below, in music and in mirth—
 Ye waters of the sky,
 From your abode on high,
And come to where the erring, little mortals be.

Blow, blow, across the snow, upon the lofty mountains,
Blow, blow, to and fro, over the wooded fountains,
 O morning wind,
 All unconfined,
And breathe into our hearts thy raptures undivined.

 Play upon the water,
 And pause upon the earth;
 And be in the day no hotter,
 Than in thy morning mirth :
Blow, blow, and sweetly so, and softer still and softer,
With all thy merry music, with all thy happy laughter.

Glow, glow, over the snow, out of the veil of night,
Glow, glow, and brightly show your many eyes of light,
 Ye stars in heaven,
 To whom is given
A wondrous glory of ethereal sight.

 Shine in the sky above us,
 And shine upon this earth;
Ye know, and can ye love us—?
 Our lowly little worth.

Glow, glow, although ye know our lowly little
worth,
And smoothe away our sorrows, and smile upon this
earth."

" Now little Sindu, with thou also sing?
Thy brother sang so sweetly—" Asoka cried;
And then the little Sindu smiled and sang :—

“ Dark in the night, dark in the night,
The waters part and flow;
Deep in the light, deep in the light,
The ripples leap below.
Dark are the rays of life and light—
Deep are the waves of life and light—
Like waters of the ocean,
In a continual motion.
From earth to clouds, from clouds to
earth,
Passing on from birth to birth,
In sorrow or in smiles of mirth,
Or meekly in devotion.

Soft in the morn, soft in the morn,
The breeze doth wake and blow;
Sweet in the morn, sweet in the morn,
It streameth to and fro.
Soft is the smile of life at morn;
Sweet is the smile of life re-born,

Like odour-bearing breezes,
Whose music never ceases;
From air to earth, from earth to air,
Now sadly sweet, now rich and rare,
Above, around and everywhere,
It thrills and throbs and pleases.

Bright in the sky, bright in the sky,
Behold the stars are shining;
Bright in the sky, they gaze on high,
Into our hearts divining.
Bright is the light of heaven above;
Bright is the light of life and love,
Like myriad stars now beaming,
When all the earth is dreaming;
Above, below, they watch and know,
The rich and poor, the high and low—
The eyes of God for ever aglow—
All equal to them seeming.

Soft and sweet, soft and sweet,
The dawn doth melt away;
Soft and sweet, with golden feet,
Into the kindling day.
Life and Death for ever mingle,
As light and darkness, and a single
Smile of Love unites them,
Divides them and delights them;

They part and meet, and meet and part,
As God's twin children with one heart,
And teach thee what, O Man, thou art,
When Heaven to earth invites them."

Asoka's soul felt happy as he heard
The kindling rapture of these thrilling songs.
Thereafter he beheld a newer light
Streaming around him, wherein all the world
Was beautiful and bright, and all of life
Was sweet and sacred as a mother's love.
A newer joy arose within his soul,
Filling his mind with music, and the sounds
Of Nature's voice, that murmur in the breeze,
Or ripple in the waves, or in the notes
Of merry birds awake the morning dews,
Were soothing to his bosom, and his eye
Perceived a newer glory in the sun,
A newer radiance in the moon and stars,
A newer loveliness in every flower,
And in the heart of Man a newer home.

Yet sometimes, in the forest, when he saw
The birds flying away at his approach,
And with a timorous glance, the mountain deer
Darting away as quickly, he would feel
Heavy at heart, and sadly sigh and say—
"Alas, alas, my penance is not full.

When I behold these creatures whom I love
So dearly, fly away to see me near.
They cannot love me—no, nor any man :
The marks of blood are deep on me, and these
No human tears can ever wash away.
But wilt Thou also let me cry in vain,
Nor cast an eye of mercy on a soul
Wrecked on the surging waves of wanton life,
O Father, who didst bring me to such birth ?
Then let me die, if no one cares to love
Asoka's poor and miserable heart.”
But he was strong in his new-visioned light,
And did not long give way to gloomier thoughts.
So two more years of Knowledge passed away.

And now because the kingdom he had left
To be a lonely hermit in his cave,
Had gone to pieces, and the people groaned
Under the weight of many cruel wrongs,
And naught was safe—nor life, nor home, nor
hearth—
Nor any justice, no, nor any awe
Of sovereign power to keep the proud in check,
And curb the wild misdeeds of lawless bands—
But all confusion, worse than any war,
Prevailed on every side—they thought if he,
Their rightful liege would come to them again,
And be their ruler, all might yet be well.

And so they sought Asoka where he lived
With holy Upagupta and the boys,
And prayed to him to be their lord again.

“ Oh do not, do not tell us nay,” they cried,
“ But come with us to be our sovereign King ;
We suffer daily wrongs without thee—come,
And save us as thou hopest to be saved.
Thy widowed kingdom weeps for thee, O lord,
And weep for thee thy children fatherless.
Thou art our Cowherd—come, protect thy cows,
And take them to thy mighty fold, and shield
Them all from insult, cruelty and death.
Thy Dharma is thy subjects’ care—thy life
To make them happy, and thy boundless joy
To see them grow and prosper and be good.
Not for the hermit-forest is the King ;
Not for the mountain-penance is the King ;
Not for the lonely sorrow is the King ;
But in his people’s heart, his people’s deeds,
And for his people’s good he lives and reigns.
But if thou wilt not listen to our need,
And let us cry in vain and suffer all
The hourly tortures worse than any death,
Then may the deed be on the head of him
Who takes it so—we will not eat or drink,
But lie before thy door and weep and die :
And may the gods forgive us, and thy soul.”

Then holy Upagupta smiled and said—
Thy time is come, my son, and thou must go,
E'en as thy people ask thee, to thy realm.
Yet go with joy :—it is the call of love,
It is the call of duty. Be their King,
And help thy subjects with a father's care.
Protect the weak, uphold the poor and old,
And raise the fallen with thy mighty arm;
Let justice guide thy hand, and in thy heart
Let mercy reign, and all thy people be
As children of one mother in one home.
Establish in thy realm the Law of Love,
And with thy mighty voice proclaim the Truth
Which thou hast visioned here, of Life and Light.
Renounce ambition and relinquish pride,
And tremble at the very name of War;
And let thy conquests be the kingdoms won
Within the heart—the triumphs of the soul
O'er lust and anger, greed and selfishness.

“ Remember what thou wert, and what thou art,
And what thou should'st be. Think of Satvasan,
And the immortal warriors of his hosts
Who suffered death that all the world be saved,
And from their blood a newer life may grow
Of freedom, love and peace and brotherhood.
Then be a willing worker to that end,

That the great vision of Kalinga's lord
Be realized, and from his sacrifice
A newer glory shine on him, and those
Who died with him so nobly, and on thee.

“Go, live for those who call thee. Reign in peace,
And ruling by the Law of Love, forbear
To slay a single creature of the Lord.
Let none destroy, or cause a life to bleed—
Be it the ant that creeps or worm that crawls—
Or kill through fear a wild beast or a snake :
But let the world receive a newer light
That kindles with this day, and everywhere,
In cities and in lowly cottages,
By river bank or snowy mountain top,
Or forest haunt or rock-embosomed cave—
Wherever people meet and pilgrims go—
Let there be heard the mighty voice of God
In thrilling music from His temples raised.
Inscribe upon the living heart of Time,
And not the pages fading with the years,
The Law of Truth, that all may know and lead
The life of goodness, love and piety.
And thus thy name will last for evermore,
And future ages bless the holy King
Who made this earth a fit abode for gods.
So go with joy, and be their King again.”

Then he, the King, with folded hands replied—
“ Thy will is law, O Father, unto me,
Which I must do, howe’er I live or die.
Yet may I seek one favour ? ”

“ Freely ask,”
Replied the Sage, “nor fear to be denied.”

“ Then do thou also go with me, and take
These little children who have made me live.
My life is lonely and this task is great,
And I must fail unless thou help me too.
Thou told’st me life is all for others’ sake,
And death for ours :—then may I beg thee go
With me for those who call thee to their need ? ”

“ Thou hast my word,” replied the holy Sage ;
“ I go with thee—so may the gods be pleased.
And will ye also go, my little ones,
To great Asoka’s court ? He is a King,
And not a smaller man as you or I.”

Then little Indu gaily laughed and said—
“ He was my father—now he is my King,
And will be pleased to make me also great.”

“ And what wilt thou, my little Sindu—?
Speak.”

He blushed—"A pilgrim's staff and holy books,
To spread thy Law through many distant lands."

They smiled, and every heart was filled with joy.
And then the little children sweetly sang :—

"Farewell, to newer scenes of life we go;
Our Father and the King have willed it so;
But we shall meet again :—Farewell, farewell.

Ye hallowed streams and high impurpled moun-
tains,
Ye wooded haunts of many rippling fountains,
Where we have laughed and played—farewell,
farewell.

Ye merry birds, and O thou gentle fawn,
Will ye not go with us, and on the lawn
Of the King's garden say—'Farewell, farewell?'

The cows and calves have now returned, and they
Will surely go with us, and every day
Together shall we be, nor say farewell.

Our hearts are happy, but we sigh to leave
Our pleasures here of morning and the eve,
And weep to say again—farewell, farewell.

Sweet are these scenes, but sweeter still the voice
Of human soul, so let us all rejoice
To love and live for Man :—Farewell, farewell.”

RADHA AND KRISHNA.

I.

SWEET tears of heart too simple to be wise,
Dear sorrow, soother of the mind's distress;
How often have I wept with willing eyes,
And stilled my anguish with your tenderness!
O teach me, Love, O teach me to suppress
The purple secret of my life entire;
For like a moth that burns itself to bless
The shining altar, doth my soul desire
Thy kindling, quivering light—the Heaven of
Hope on fire.

II.

I saw him in the morning, and the cows
Were grazing gently on the dewy grass;
I went to bathe and pay my daily vows,
When I beheld him slowly, softly pass—
Unconscious of my rapture—where I was.
One look, one light, one life, one lasting love—
And then who cares if all this woven mass
Of blood and bone should melt away to prove
What thrilling, throbbing pain within the heart
doth move.

III.

My mother sees me—and I hide my tears;
My maidens watch me—and I haste away;
But where can I conceal, behind my fears,
The soul that cannot sleep by night or day?—
But ever dreams of what its longings may,
Low to his heart, in eager silence tell.
Love breathes its tender tale to love, they say :
Then he must know what doth within me swell :
And will he speak to me—were it to say farewell?

IV.

My love is like the lotus of the morn;
My life is like the lotus of the eve;
And one sad day hath made me so forlorn.
O morning breeze, around his lotus weave
Thy wreath of music, and to me but leave
The stillness of a deep, chill night below :
O morning lake, around him gently heave
Thy sunlight sounding waves in rippling flow,
And all thy deathlike slumber only let me know.

V.

I saw and dreamt—it was a vision fair;
I dreamt and saw—it was a woeful sight;
And then I wept—and lo, I saw him there,
Smiling upon me with his eyes of light :

And I too smiled, when darkness of midnight
Surrounded me, and I was left alone.
Oh! had I only wept—alas, I might
Have watched and waited only—had I known :
But who can tell? The fault was mine—this fate
my own.

VI.

I went to bathe again:—the morn was bright;
The sweet South-wind had kissed the roses red,
And left the tender jasmines passion-white;
The little birds were happy as they played,
And hundred tales of wedded joy they said—
Awakened by the music of their dreams;
Alone, unseen, the Koel overhead,
In deep, shrill echo of its longing themes,
Uttered a cry of anguish—"Is love what it seems?"

VII.

He was not there, whom I had gone to see;
He was not there—my light of morning fair;
My lord of life, my maiden-rapture, he,
The dear, the dark-eyed Keshav, was not there.
O, how I longed to see him—how the air
Trembled but with the murmur of his name;
And how I longed to lay my bosom bare
Before him all unmindful of my shame—
That I might hear him speak, were it to chide and
blame.

VIII.

The cows were grazing on the dewy grass,
But he, the cruel Cowherd, was not there;
He was so proud—why should he care to pass,
To please an unknown maiden in despair,
Who vainly sighed for what he could not share?
Ah Cowherd, if this heart were thine, and I
But heard the secret whisper of thy prayer,
My soul should know no bounds of ecstasy,
And do unbidden what thou would'st, though I
 should die.

IX.

Love tells its tale of purple agony;
Life tells its tale of sorrow and despair;
And both are woven so mysteriously!
I wish for both—yet both I cannot bear:
Their voice is sweet, but sad and full of care,
And both of them are calling me, within.
O Life, allay my grief—my heart repair;
O Love, thy balmy comfort let me win,
And lead me from the threshold of thy temple, in.

X.

Dream of my dreams, and vision of my soul;
Light of my life, and guardian of my youth:
The greater part, to make my lesser whole;
The higher Self, diviner than all Truth!

As gods in their unutterable ruth
Behold this earth, so do thou gaze on me—
One moment—and this panting bosom soothe :
Low in the dust of thy great shadow see
Thy maiden-slave, O Lord, and save her, make her
free.

XI.

Nothing but thee I see within me, love ;
Nothing but thee I see without me, lord ;
The air is full of thee, and stars above ;
The earth doth nothing but thy name record.
The birds are singing of thee, and thy word
Is on the lips of children, young and old ;
He who hath seen thee once hath e'er adored ;
And heart, lip, eye, and mind and spirit hold
The fire of thy ethereal music, many-souled.

XII.

My eyes are dim with grief—I cannot see
Or man or maid, or father, mother, friend,
But in each face thy image haunteth me.
They speak to me of jewels, and pretend
To know that pearls and rubies soon will send
The faded colour to my cheeks again.
Ah, if they knew what heavenly glories blend
In one strange glance of ecstasy and pain,
They would not sleep in peace, or comfort me in
vain.

XIII.

Dear to the little infant is his toy;
Dear to the girl her ornaments and dress;
And dear his cows to every cowherd-boy;
The flowers are fragrant in their loveliness;
The musky dawn in morning's soft caress;
And night in milky dew-light of the Moon :
But what delight a maiden's heart can bless,
What music breathe its sweet responsive tune,
Save life's deep cry to love—" O come, I call thee,
soon !"

XIV.

I call thee from the radiance of the stars;
I call thee from the bosom of the earth;
My soul hath power to break the narrow bars
Of time and place and, mingling with thy birth,
To call thee, mine for ever, to come forth.
Thy light is in the rapture of thine eyes;
Thy light is in the music of thy mirth;
Thy light is in the glory of the skies;
And in my heart art thou, where all my secret lies.

XV.

Thou dost not listen to my cry—and once
I thought to tear this tumult from my heart—
Though bleeding, it should redden all the suns
That rove in idle space—that when I part,

Thou might'st behold my life, my death thou art.
Then in that Kingdom wilt thou weep to see,
Where mighty Yama holds his awful court,
Who loved and longed and lived and died for thee;
And then thy aching soul will sigh in vain for me.

XVI.

Let me but see him—and then I shall die
In peace and silence. Let me see his face,
The kindling passion of his lotus-eye,
The quickening nectar of his lips—a space,
And die that moment in my lowly place.
Will no one bear the message of my soul
To him, my lord—“ The suppliant kneels for grace;
For health the patient—beggar for his dole;
And a lone maiden pines for him, her God, her
goal.”

XVII.

They tell me of his stories when a boy;
They tell me of the magic of his youth;
And say, how he doth ravish in his joy
Their hearts with flaming fancies and, in sooth,
They follow him with eyes of tender ruth,
To come and play with them his moonlight dance;
When every maiden curls her ringlets smooth,
And wears new silver anklets, and each glance
Is fire—each step in air, and life as in a trance.

XVIII.

The milkmaids sit upon the parting ways
To give him curd and butter for a smile;
And bid him come again, as he doth raise
Their fingers to his lips and pause awhile
They walk from home at dawn for many a mile,
And linger till he comes at morn or eve;
And wake into the midnight, and beguile
Their tears with tales of love, and nightly weave
New wreaths in rhyme, their aching bosoms to
relieve.

XIX.

How can I hear, nor love him more and more,
Though death should be my doom? When in the
night,
I hear a stranger echo at the door.
My heart doth leap within me, and a light
In mystic radiance breaks upon my sight.
But then a pause :—It is not he, I cry;
And shattered is my vision of delight.
And in the morn again my sleepless eye
Darkens and droops :—Shall I behold him ere I
die?

XX

But yester-eve they told me there would be
A village dance and Festival of Spring,

With music, mirth and saffron revelry;
When in a moonlight circle all would sing,
And every youth his liquid odours bring
To mark his maid with rosy hues of love;
And said that he, enthroned, would be the King;
And on his Flute such heavenly echoes move
That all their hearts would leap their loyalty to
 prove.

XXI.

My mother bade me go—and ere I spake,
They had prevailed on me to be their Queen :
I knew not I was dreaming or awake,
Or understood at all what they could mean.
My mind was in a flutter—and between
The tremor and the tumult of my soul,
Doubt, dread and longing—wonder at what had
 been,
My heart did faint in dizzy uncontrol,
And wished myself away, when nearest to my goal.

XXII.

He was not there whom I had gone to see;
He was not there—the vision of my sight;
My lord of life—my maiden-rapture, he,
My dear, my dark-eyed Krishna of delight.
Oh, how I grew all weary of the night,
And so returned ere half the dance was done :
He scorned me :—Could I stay ? and was it right ?

Why should he care for me, or any one?
No more—my only joy had ended ere begun.

“ Alone, alone, my love comes in the night;
Alone, alone, my love comes in delight;
Alone, my love doth come to me alone.

He comes not to the festival or dance,
Where maidens meet to frown and look askance;
But here my love doth come to me alone.

Alone he comes to me upon this way;
Alone he waits till darkness hides the day;
And then my love doth come to me alone.

Alone he plays to me upon his Flute;
And softly whispers—as I listen mute—
‘ Alone, my love, I come to thee, alone.’

Alone, my love doth come to me, alone;
Alone, alone, my life, my light, my own;
Alone, my love doth come to me, alone.”

XXIII.

Thus sang a milkmaid as I came away,
Sitting beside the pathway, on a stone;
And as I paused to listen to her lay,
My speechless echo mingled with her own,

And low within me cried—" Alone, alone."
She ceased, and looked at me—and then I saw
What wondrous glory on her forehead shone :
" Thy heart is heavy, sister ; sit and draw
Thine arm in mine," she said, " this is the
maidens' law."

XXIV.

The night is dark—I cannot wake or sleep ;
The night is deep—I cannot sleep or wake ;
My heart is bursting, but I cannot weep ;
My body trembles and my temples ache :
It may not be :—What if their slumbers break,
And they behold me creeping out so late ?
No more—who takes my love, my life can take !
My soul can have no peace—I cannot wait—
Perchance the outside air may calm my troubled
state.

XXV.

Alone, within the forest—all alone.
The very air is dead, and not a star
Gleams through the murky clouds. The bat has
flown
Back to its hole, and only from afar
The fireflies twinkling in the distance are.
The trees appear like shadowy giants, still ;
Their tangled branches all my pathway bar :
I know not what to do :—the night is chill :
What frenzied fancy goaded me to have my will !

XXVI.

The night is dark—I know not where to go;
The night is deep—I know not where to turn;
And now the lightning flashes, but to show
What gloomy fate of folly must I learn.
Alas, does he not know? But what concern
Has he? Hark!—It's now the thunder-roar,
Dread Indra's deafening music :—Peace I yearn
For what I know not :—Wilder than before!—
What if it now should rain?—I cannot bear it more.

XXVII.

The dawn hath chased blind night; the clouds
are clearing,
And smiling through their azure arch on high,
The myriad morning stars are re-appearing;
The Seven Sages with a sleepless eye
Have ta'en their watch around the Polar sky;
The Virgin through a rifted wreath is gleaming;
And in the east where light and shadow vie,
The Orient Star above the rest is beaming;
But here alone I wake, and all the earth is
dreaming.

XXVIII.

Blow, morning breeze, and drive my grief away;
Blow, morning breeze, and tell me where he hides;
Blow, blow, and tell him what I sigh and say
In secret to my heart where he abides.

Glow, gentle stars, and show him where he guides
My fonder fancy to the wood's recess.
This hour is sweet—the jealous day derides
Love's tremor and its aching tenderness,
And pries into its dreams it dashes with distress.

XXIX.

Sweet after midnight is the light of morn;
Sweet after midnight is the sight of love;
The soft Sirisha wakens to adorn
The budding beauty of the Champak grove;
The Madhavi and mango branches prove
The eager influence of the balmy hour;
And hark!—the Koel's deep, shrill cry above,
Re-echoed by his mate with added power;
And all the woods are ringing now from bower to
bower.

“ Alone, I wait to meet my love at dawn;
Alone, where trees their verdant veil have drawn;
Alone, I wait—my love will come to me.

He came to me in an entrancing dream;
And bade me wake and follow o'er the stream;
And here I wait—my love will come to me.

Far from the beaten pathway, on a stone,
I wait for him—my love will come alone;
Alone, I wait—my love will come to me.

Alone, I wait—my love will come, nor late,
In amber silk and peacock-crested state;
Alone, I wait—my love will come to me.

This heart is thine, my love, and thine is mine;
Love made thee Man, and made my Soul divine;
And so I wait—my love will come to me."

XXX.

It is the milkmaid—but I cannot wait :
Her voice is sweet—yet I must wander on :
My heart is throbbing :—It's the hour of Fate,
And I must die, or meet him, ere the dawn
Hath melted into morning, all alone.
Accept this life, O lord, it is not mine—
But there upon the waters where, unknown,
My soul was wedded to thy light divine,
Receive it, though in death—but thine, forever
thine.

XXXI.

O mother Jumna, will thy holy waves
List to a maiden's sorrow? Will they bear
A drooping heart to one who sees and saves
The weary pilgrim of a hopeless prayer—
Yearning for him and dying in despair?
The clouds convey their message to the hills,
From snowy mountains, and the gentle air

RADHA AND KRISHNA.

Whispers in echo to the trembling rills :—
Then tell him what I feel, and tell me what he will.

XXXII.

Tell him, she longed for life, but died for love;
Tell him, her heart was tender to the death;
She dreamt of one who like a god above
Her lowly birth, yet mingled with her breath,
And kindled joy that never perisheth.
Yet blame him not—he did not, could not know;
Or else his heavenly voice that comforteth
The world entire, had laid my tumult low : —
But now it may not be :—How deep the waters flow !

XXXIII.

Hark to the strains !—It is a magic Flute—
Thrilling the virgin bosom of delight,
And waking all my heaving longings mute;
I never heard such wonder melt the light.
The very soul of passion in its might
Of wingéd fire is bursting through the heart;
Deeper than music of the stars at night;
Dearer than love, when it doth meet or part;
And more divine than aught in poets' purple art.

XXXIV.

More near and near !—Then let me pause awhile.
Away—no more—it cannot be for me;

It's sweeter than the light of lingering smile
On lip and eye in speechless ecstasy.
More near and near :—How foolish can I be
To draw on sand the picture of my fate!
But who comes here? Alas, what do I see
In amber silk and peacock-crested state?
Let me go home :—What do I here? It is so late!

“ Sweet love that quivers in its maiden light,
Sweet love that trembles in its morning might—
Sweet love, awake, it's Love is calling thee.

Sweet love that seeketh for a viewless goal,
Sweet love, the image of the soul in soul,
Sweet love, awake, it's Love is calling thee.

Sweet life that blushes through the lip and eye
The purple passion of its phantasy,
Sweet life, awake, it's Life is calling thee.

Sweet life, the lustre of a light divine,
Sweet life, the centre of my heart and thine—
Sweet life, awake, it's Life is calling thee.

Sweet love, sweet life, sweet lustre, longing sweet,
Where mind and heart and soul in music meet—
Sweet Life, awake, it's Love is calling thee.”

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

INDIA.

HAST thou heard the call, O Mother? Arise for
march of the Day;

Hast thou heard the trumpet, Mother, blown from
the depths of the soul?

Awake to the call of thy children. The voice of
gods in thunder

Hath spoken again in their ears the message of the
world of life.

The earth is ableeding with wounds of many pas-
sions, and hate,

And strife and aggression, have opened their arms
to engulf it in Death;

And the fire is still out-spreading and threatens to
consume all life.

Awake, O Mother, and silence the ruthless and ter-
rible rage

Of this world-shaking tumult, with thy voice in
celestial music

Rolling o'er the sea and shore and calling the na-
tions to peace.

And so arise, O Mother, to the star-land of eternal
name,

68 MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Low from the valleys and mountains, up to that
Kingdom of Light,
Where myriads of suns of glory are shining, and
the smiles of Heaven
Invite thy heart to open the gates of the Life of
the World.

CRADLE OF THE SEA.

BREAK on the shore, O Sea !
Break on the shore, and more and more
Let thy billows roar, O Sea.

We are sailing in a leaky boat,
And the storm is gathering fast ;
Our oars are broken, and we float
At the mercy of the rising blast.

Break on our boat, O Sea, and take
The wreck into the deep ;
But we shall float, and softly wake
Out of thy bosomed sleep.

We 'll nor sink, nor sigh, nor swoon, but
drink
The nectar of the deep ;
And rise again, ere the eye can wink,
To heights as vast and steep.
So break on the shore of Time, and shake
Our boat of Life, O Sea ;
Break on the shore, and more and more
Let thy billows roar, O Sea ;

We will not fear, but laugh and cheer,
When the waves are high, O Sea,
And smile and sleep, when they sink as
deep—
In thy cradle we lie, O Sea.

HOME.

O, I was afraid of shadows, my love.
Thou art as sweet and tender, my love,
As the light of the morn in its glory above :
 But I was afraid
 I should never be led
Back to the shores of my country, my love.

Dark was the sky of Autumn to me,
When I stood at the door of our cottage to be
Parted for years—for ages, from thee;
 Then was I afraid
 Thou would'st hear of the dead,
Not meet me in life so sweetly, my love.

Would'st hear of the War and its terrible toll ?
Nay now, it is gone, that frenzy of soul ;
But the loss and the gain is the same on the whole.
 Had they been as they said,
 Never a heart would have bled,
And life had been fairer and happier, my love.

Let us think of the present and the future to be ;
Forget with the past its mad misery ;

And dwell on the joys we are hoping to see—
 So long delayed,
 For daily I prayed
To see thee and the child of our bosom, my love.

Had I died on the field—? nay, sigh not, my love;
I was saved, and His mercy was ever on me, love;
Yet many a widow hath died as the dove
 That droops by the dead,
 With her heart on his laid—
But I was afraid of shadows, my love.

THE BLIND MINSTREL.

PLAY, minstrel, play upon thy flute;
Play, gentle minstrel, play upon thy flute.

The lamps have been lighted;
The guests have alighted;
And my heart is delighted, O minstrel,
to-night;
Play, play, upon thy flute;
Play, minstrel, play upon thy flute.

I heard thee by the wayside,
And listened as one mute;
Now here my men have called thee
To play upon thy flute.
Play, minstrel, play upon thy flute;
Play, gentle minstrel, play upon thy flute.

The feast is ready,
The wine is heady,
But our hearts are steady, O minstrel, to-
night;
Play, play upon thy flute;
Play, minstrel, play upon thy flute.

Thy music is deep and tender,
Thy music is soft and sweet;
And brighter than the laughter
Of lips as when they meet;
Play, minstrel, play upon thy flute;
Play, gentle minstrel, play upon thy flute.

Why dost thou wait
And hesitate
So long and late, O minstrel, to-night?
The guests will depart,
And know not thy art—
The time is short, O minstrel, to-night.
So, minstrel, play upon thy flute;
Play, minstrel, play upon thy flute.

What, silent still, thou old man?
Thou dost not know thy place!
Wilt play upon the wayside
To beggars of thy race?
The blind old man—not play upon his flute!—
Then turn him out, and break his rotten flute.

AWAKE.

AWAKE, my little one, awake;
Awake for thy loving mother's sake.

Dreams of the morning hover
In the light that thy eyelids cover—
Tender and sweet,
With golden feet,
As the fairies that dance in the Moon and above
her.

Awake, my little one, awake;
Awake for thy loving mother's sake.

The parrot from its cage is calling thee, love;
The peacock is waiting for thy voice, to play;
Hark to the cooing of the fond ring-dove,
Hark to the call of the kindling day. .
Awake, my little one, awake;
Awake for thy loving mother's sake.

The Koel from its nest is calling thee, love;
Thy playmates are waiting for thee on the way;
The bright butterflies are racing above
The flowers in their white and golden array :

Awake, my little one, awake;
Awake for thy loving mother's sake.

The breeze is blowing thy hair aside;
Thy cheeks are blooming with a peaceful rest;
Thy hands half closed, as the petals that hide
The wealth of the rose which the morning
hath blest;
Awake, my little one, awake;
Awake for thy loving mother's sake.

Thy lips are parting to the kisses of the wind;
Thine eyes are opening to the blushes of light;
Hark to the call of thy mother, and find
Thy father, to leap into his arms in delight.
Awake, my little one, awake;
Awake for thy loving mother's sake.

LIGHT.

LIGHT, O my light !
In the deepening of delight,
In the vision of thy sight,
In purple and white—
Light, O my light.

Thou fillest the heaven with glory;
Thou fillest the earth with thy hues;
And my bosom with love thou fillest,
With the lustre thine eyes diffuse;
When the stars are gazing in rapture,
And I cannot but wake and muse.

Thou art ruby in the lips;
Thou art radiance in the eye;
Thou art passion in the heart—
In the soul dost thou lie.

Light, O my light !
As tender and bright,
As the life and the love
Of a goddess above,
That can neither be old nor die.

The morn hath kissed the roses
Red on every bough ;
The blue-eyed lotus listens
To their musky mutual vow ;
And to the Narcissus whispers—
“ Behold, but ask not how—
Light, as thy light,
Can souls unite,
For ever, if the heart allow.”

The Koel is singing on high, .
Its song of eager desire—
“ Let me live in thy light, or die,
Ere the morning hath quenched its fire.”
And his mate doth answer with a cry—
“ I am thine, I am thine entire.”

Light, O my light !
In the deepening of delight,
In the vision of thy sight,
On a moon-lit night—
Light, O my light.

The clouds in the west are tinted
With many hues of eve ;
Yellow and green and purple
Their rainbow rapture weave,

And kindle the face of the Ocean,
With blushing heart to heave.
Such wondrous sight
Of liquid light
Can melt the soul to music, the aching
mind relieve.

Music along the waters,
And music in the air;
And in my heart is music,
And music everywhere.

Indra is smiling on the love-lit skies;
Indra is smiling on the white-eyed stars;
Varuna is smiling on the waves as they
rise,
And mingle with the motions of the
earth on her course;
And thou on my soul art smiling—thine
eyes
Are beaming on mine with a wondrous
force.

Light, O my light!
What strange delight
In love's dear sight
On a moon-lit night!
Light, O my light!

LIFE.

LIFE, O my life!
In the meeting of love,
In the greeting of love,
In the seating of love
On the throne of my life!

The South-wind is blowing from tree to tree,
Lighted by the fragrance of Karna on wing;
The South-wind is telling thy story to me,
With its eyes aglow with the odours of Spring;
Kissing the rapture of thine eyes, as they see
The blush and the beauty of a secret thing—
With many a rite
Of strange delight
Of hallowed night it doth bear and bring.

Hark to the notes of the Nightingale,
Stealing through the fragrance that kindles thy
room;
And mingling with the music of thy life and my
tale,
And weaving a piteous charm in the gloom
Of a heart that is heavy and the eyes that are pale,
On the lips that are lovely as the rose in its bloom.

Soft be thy slumber as the white moon-light;
Sweet be thy slumber in the cradle of dreams;
Dear as the longing that blushes to-night,
In the ear and the eye, its tenderest themes;
Bearing, in the musk of its message so bright,
The music of thy name in fairy love-beams;
And pressing thy lips with kisses of delight,
In visions of glory in purple streams.

Life, O my life!
In the meeting of love,
In the greeting of love,
In the seating of love
On the throne of my life!

INDRA'S NYMPHS.

In the light of the night,
As brilliantly bright
As the day at its height,
O Indra, our lord,
We are singing around thee;
O master adored,
We are bringing around thee,
The musk and the might
Of music's delight—
So dear in thy sight.

Dance, till the sky be reeling as fast
As the heart of a nymph when her god goes past,
Swifter than the race of the rising blast.
Let thy throne be alone
As firm as thy own
Great power to all known—
More glorious than Agni, more wondrous, more
vast.

Sing, that the stars in rapture be mute,
And stare with the spirits of moonlight, and shoot
Upwards and downwards, our cadence to suit;
Let them gaze in amaze
For ever, and praise

On their pathless ways
The Master of our voice and vina and flute.

The clouds at thy bidding wander or wait,
With thunder and lightning, early or late;
And shake into torrents at thy voice of Fate;

 The earth at her worth
 Sighs, but thy mirth
 Fills her with the birth
Of joy so tremulous and delicate.

Thou art lord of the earth, thou art lord of the
 Heaven;
Of the wind and the waters, and the glory of Seven
Great centres of light is all to thee given :

 Thou makest, thou takest;
 Thou bindest, thou breakest;
 Thou shapest, thou shakest—
O Indra, our lord, whose shadow we live in.

DREAMS AND DEEDS.

DREAMS of the night, when the star-eyes glisten
In the forehead of heaven, in their wondrous
light;

Dreams of the dawn, when the roses listen
To the voice of the breeze on the musky lawn :—

Like the long black tresses that a maiden dresses
In endless and intricate mazes—
Like her dark, deep eyes, when in glad surprise
Her head to the sky she raises;

Like the dewy grove of a virgin's love,
Where the heart in its silence speaks—
Like the veil of a bride, thrown softly aside,
And the blush on her lips and her cheeks;

Like the flashes of fire, of kindling desire,
And the sight and delight of the goal—
With eager emotion and tender devotion,
And throbbing and thrilling of the soul.

Deeds of the morn, when the flowers are rocking
On the lap of the earth like children new-born;
Deeds of the day, when the bees go flocking
Their store of honey to gather and lay :—

Like the cry of the bird, in the garden heard,
 Calling, alone, for its mate;
Like the song of a heart, that's glad to impart
 Its joy to each ear at the gate;

Like the seed in the earth, in the throes of its birth,
 And the leaf and the opening flower;
Like the fruit on the tree, so lovely to see
 In the bloom of its ripening hour;

Like the passion of youth for the beacon of Truth—
 Seeking and searching and sighing;
Like the wisdom of years, unshaken by fears,
 With a smile for ever replying.

Dreams of the night and deeds of the morn,
Dreams of the dawn and deeds of the day—
As shadow and light are brothers in flight,
And the curtain is drawn of mystery upon
The vision of sleep, ere it wakens reborn
On the threshold of life, we smile and we play,
Or toil with our tears to our journey's height—
O tell me, are our deeds but the days that are gone,
And our dreams where the hopes of the future are
 gay?

A NIGHTINGALE.

A NIGHTINGALE was singing to a Rose,
Alone within her little moon-light bower—
“ How still the night, how sweet the South-wind
blows,
And yet how sad am I, how proud this flower !
Alas, who knows the secret of the soul,
Who reads the eager anguish of the mind,
But he who, on the threshold of his goal,
Yet knows not what his bosom longs to find !

“ Who made the heart so tender and so stern ?
Who kindled hopes that could not be fulfilled,
And gave to me my nightly tale of woe ?
Ah, dost thou also for some fair one yearn ?
Are these the tears thine eyes have now distilled ?
Oh ! tell me—let us weep together so.”

THE PILGRIM.

I COME to you, O mountains,
A pilgrim from afar;
Blessed are your fountains,
And sages' home ye are.

O'er rocks and yawning valleys,
Barefooted and alone,
With faith as my companion,
I walk unwearied on.

Your paths are full of dangers,
And hard to cross and climb—
Your mighty precipices
Unchanging through all time.

Clouds rest on your pillow,
And lightning's in your eye;
And thunder is your echo,
Bursting tumultuously.

The pass is steep and narrow,
And dark, through which I creep;
With bristling ends o'erhanging
These awful valleys deep.

Yet onwards still, and upwards,
Alone, barefooted, slow,
Up to the source of Ganges
Unwearied shall I go.

There Mahadev's temple
Upon its sunlit height,
Over the cloudland rises
So pure and snowy white.

Where sky and air and mountain
Are mingled, is my goal;
Where there is naught around me
But He who made the Whole.

FAMINE.

SHE came and stood before the door—
The rich man soundly slept :—
Her cheeks were pale, her eyes were sore,
She could not speak, and wept.

But no one saw; and then she cried—
“ Oh, give us bread to eat.
The father, and then two sons died
Of hunger and of heat.

And now—this little one and I—
Oh, give her bread to eat!
Or like her brothers she will die
Of hunger in the street.”

But no one heard—and then she ceased;
Her eyes were dry again; ‘
The faintness in her limbs increased—
She could not move for pain.

But still she crept on as before—
Alone a poor man waked;
She stood before his cottage door,
And fast his bosom ached.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

He came out when he saw her there,
And gently led her in;
And took the child whom she did bear—
Asleep, but pale and thin.

She rested for a little while :—
“Thou must be hungry so—”
He cried, and with a cheerful smile
Out of the room did go.

The midnight hour had struck ere he
Brought in his little store;
And gave her what, for charity,
He got from door to door.

She looked at him, and deeply sighed,
And did not speak or eat;
“Eat, my good woman, eat,” he cried—
And fast his heart did beat.

“Thou hast not eaten too,” said she,
“For three days past, or more—”
“Nay, nay—but eat thou—let that be—
I could not beg, though poor.”

She looked at him and deeply sighed,
And did not eat or speak;

And when to press her still he tried,
She wept, now grown more weak.

The dawn had broken in the east,
When o'er her child she bent;
And laid her on her wasted breast,
And out again she went.

She paused before a temple door,
Slowly to enter there;
And heard the morning music soar
With saddening sounds of prayer.

The conchs did blow, the cymbals beat,
And many a heart did cry—
“ Oh give us, give us bread to eat,
Oh give us, or we die.”

She entered in, and laid her child
Upon a mother's knee :
The little one awoke and smiled—
But where, oh where is she ?

Behind the lamp-lights, on the floor,
Who is she kneeling here ?
Will she not rise again ? No more—
She claims from Death a tear.

O COME.

O COME, O come, upon the wings of night;
O come, O come, upon the wings of love;
How many eyes are waking in the light
That twinkles in the stars, in heaven above.
O come, O come, the Moon is re-appearing—
A mystic halo circles round her face;
O come, O come, one look is more endearing
Than all the kindling rapture of this place.
Bright is the Moon and tender,
Soft is the earth below;
Fair in its fiery splendour,
The sky in starry glow :
But brighter, softer, fairer, tenderer thou,
Than all that I have seen, than all I witness now.

O come, O come, upon the wings of light;
O come, O come, upon the wings of love;
I wait for thee, alone, all day and night—
Alone, as a forsaken, widowed dove.
O come, O come, the stars are disappearing;
The dawn is brightening in the dewy east;
The pale Moon fades away, the clouds are clearing,
And to the temple goes the pious priest.

The breeze is from the west,
The dawn is from the east;
But where wilt thou take rest,
O heart, and be appeased?
From west to east, from morn to evening dark,
I watch and wait, and thy approaching footsteps
mark.

O come, O come upon the wings of dawn,
O come, O come, upon the wings of day;
Behold the dewdrops glittering on the lawn,
Behold the flowers in all their splendour gay.
O come, O come—the earth is musk and roses,
The air is amber, and the eye aflame
To see how sweetly heart on heart reposes—
Enraptured in the dreams of tender name.
Dewdrops are soft and fair,
The flowers are bright and gay;
And sweet this balmy air,
And calm the coming day;
But sweeter, softer, dearer, balmier yet,
The tears that weep for thee, too deeply to forget.

O come, O come, upon the wings of life,
O come, O come, upon the wings of love;
Long have I suffered, but this eager strife
Is sweeter to my soul than Heaven above.

O come, O come, the day is shining brightly,
And all the birds are vocal in their mirth,
And in my bosom what is whispering lightly?—
“ Behold, of newer glory, newer birth.”

Oh! wilt thou come to me,
My life, my love, my lord?
And is this ecstasy
That thrills me at each word,
Because I hope, or thy approach is near?
Ah, wilt thou come to me?—Then why, alas, this
fear?

A REVERIE.

BEHOLD the moonlight playing on the sea—
A breathing picture in a fairyland;
And gazing on the waters ardently,
Who is this Minstrel, bearing in his hand
A broken harp? How lovely is the night,
And tender are the hopes that linger here,
Within the sacred precincts of this place—
Which heart to heart, and lips to lips endear,
And kindle roses on each eager face,
When soul to soul is listening in delight.

Withdraw thy veil, O Mistress of the sky,
And cast thine eyes upon the earth beneath:
Ah, who doth know that strangest ecstasy
Which longs, and yet forbears its tale to breathe!
It's now the nightingale that weeps at night;
It's now the Koel happier than the morn;
And it's the human heart now sad, now gay:
How many hopes are in a moment born!
How many waves upon the sea-shore play!
How many bosoms heave to kiss thy light!

Hark! what soft music plays on shore and bays;
What tremulous echoes from the cliffs and caves

The wind conveys in its melodious lays—
Commingle with the murmur of the waves !
O, what a happy world's around me here,
What tender sounds, what thrilling sights I see,
And feel a joy I never knew before :
O Night, reveal thy moonlight mystery
To wind and waters, but to me endear
The theme that makes me sigh for evermore.

O life, O love, and O ye stars above,
Do ye behold, and smile to see our grief ?
How many hearts have died your tears to move,
How many more yet hope for your relief !
O life, if thou wert but a happy dream,
And love a vision of the morning fair,
And not a soul were wrecked upon the sea—
Sweet as the moonlight as it now doth seem,
Bright as the stars, light as the musky air,
And calm as central depths of waters be !

Yet would the heart be happier, were it so—
If life and love were dreams and visions fair ?
How would I sigh, your sorrows still to know,
How long for grief, your gladness still to share !
Then welcome lightning, thunder, storm and rain,
And then a calm to soothe and comfort me ;
For sadness maketh all things doubly sweet—
Transforming them anew unceasingly ;

And those who part on earth are born again,
And only wait awhile, in joy to meet.

Then let me sing and sigh for evermore,
And mark the Moon behind that darksome cloud;
Sweet are the strains of music as before,
But close secluded from the gaping crowd,
Singeth the Minstrel now. The music dies,
And now the Moon hath cast aside her veil,
And gazes on the ocean's mighty swell:
Then cease, O heart, this eager, anxious tale;
Only in silence soul to soul replies:
So sleep to wake in peace, for all is well.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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